CCC INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED BODTKE

Interviewer: Bob Shierbaum
Greenfield, Iowa.

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DNR: Where was your hometown?
Alfred: Waumer, Iowa.

DNR: How old were you when you joined the CCC's?
Alfred: I just turned 21 and went in October 9, 1933.

DNR: What did you do before you went into the CCC's?
Alfred: I worked on a farm. I did it for room and board.

DNR: Why did you enroll into the CCC's?
Alfred: I wanted to help the folks at home and maybe see a little bit of the country.

DNR: How many were in your family?
Alfred: 11.

DNR: How many camps were you assigned too?
Alfred: Well, I was in Ft. Snelling Minnesota. That was the gathering point. There was a lot of kids. We got inoculated there. I was there for about 10 days. Wynona, Minnesota called and said they needed 27 people. We went to Lyon. They issued our clothes and shipped us out. We had two cooks there. There was no electricity. We had candles. It took until January before we got electricity into the camp. It was a generator. Our job done there was fighting forest fires.

DNR: October to November you were in Ft. Snelling?
Alfred: Okay.

DNR: What was your first day like?
Alfred: Inoculations. There were about 100 of us from Adair. They took us by alphabetical order. They had a whole row of doctors. One checked your sight, one checked your hearing, then another doctor gave small pox shots. Poor Jack Arnett passed out because of the fear of the shots. But they took care of him. One of the officers asked if anyone had meat butchering experience. I said I did. They put me on KP duty to chop pigs up into pork cutlets. It took almost the whole afternoon to chop up the hogs. I did it and it was the only KP duty I had to do.

DNR: Did you get issued toiletries?
Alfred: Everything except shaving cream and deoderant.

DNR: What kind of clothes were you issued?

Everything was WWI issued. Woolen underwear and longjohns. Woolen shirt, woolen khaki pants, and one khaki overcoat and one cap. It was a V cap. I had a beautiful uniform. I loaned it for a play and never got it back.

DNR: What was the camp like?
Alfred: It was about three acres. They cleared out the pine trees and left the persimmon trees.

DNR: Do you got to Leia, Iowa?
Alfred: When we left Arkansas we went to Iowa in October of '34. Same company. The name was changed to Camp Lyon. I stayed there until December of '36.

DNR: What kind of bed did you have?
Alfred: We had canvas army cots. We had them in Minnesota and Arkansas. Arkansas had a solid floor. There were about 30 cots, 15 on each side. The officer in charge of the barracks was in the first cot. I got my two stripes in January in Arkansas when I worked for the State Department. They put me in charge of tools.

DNR: Could a two striper or three striper be in charge of the barracks?
Alfred: Yes the two striper could but not anyone below that rank.

DNR: Who supplied your bedding and sleep ware?
Alfred: We had two wool blankets and four sheets, two pillowcases, one pillow and a four inch thick mattress. If you had enough stuff to fill it out with. The pillow was hard and it was still a 'pilla'.

DNR: Did you remember any of your bunkmates?
Alfred: I remember Orbil Murr. He got married down there and stayed. Jayce Waring. He passed away. He worked for me in the shop. After he got out he went to San Francisco. Lee Carter. He worked for me in the shop. I was allowed up to two people in the shop.

DNR: How did you guys get along?
Alfred: Good. Down in Arkansas you could buy two kinds of whiskey. You could pay 15 cents for a pint or 25 cents a pint. It was called Block and Tackle whiskey. You would walk a block and tackle anything that came up to you.

DNR: What was the food like in the mess hall?
Alfred: It was plain food. Sometimes the meat was bad because we did not have refrigeration. We would still eat it. We would gain weight.

DNR: Who did the cooking?
Alfred: We had a head cook and two assistant cooks.

DNR: Military cooks?
Alfred: CCC boys.

DNR: What were the holiday meals like?
Alfred: Powdered milk, meat with gravy, sometimes pancakes for breakfast.

DNR: Talk about your days in the CCC's and the trunk you donated to the state museum.
Alfred: Well, I can start out in the beginning then get to the trunk later on. October 6, a lawyer came out to tell me, while I was pick'in corn that I had to go to court on October 8 to go to the 3c's. Sure enough, there was a county truck waiting for us. There were others.

They took us up to Adair, Iowa. In the fairgrounds. And there boys all over the place up there. Well, three of us, who were strangers started talking. I said, if I get a chance to see something, I'm gonna see something. I don't mind being out of Iowa. Then a man walked up to us and said all the camps in Iowa were filled and that we were going to Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. It wasn't long before they had us on a train and we were heading into Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. We stayed in Minnesota. We got our small pox vaccinations, eye and hearing test. We got on KP right away. They said they needed someone.
They took me to the back part of it. There was a hog's barrel. It was about 110 gallons. It was filled with pork ribs. At that time there was a surplus of pigs. They gave me a cleaver and a knife. And they said it was my job to cut those up into four pieces. Each one of those. I stood the rest of the afternoon cutting up the meat.

They said they were going to drill us. But they said we were civilians and they wouldn't do it. We picked up trash and cleaned up the place. We stayed there about a week. And then every once in a while they would have calls for certain men in a certain place. They said we have an Iowa company at Wynona, Minnesota. We need 27 men. They took us alphabetically. Jack Arnett was a black boy from Council Bluffs. Jack was quite popular. Because he was a musician. He got away with a lot and he would stay after hours and a lot of other things.

We got down to Wynona, there was a big old tent which slept about 80 men. It had one cone stove in the middle. It was cold and the snow was knee deep. It was right on the bank of the Mississippi River. And the wind would come whistling down the river. It was cold. We would put on all our clothes and climb into bed and you couldn't keep warm.

We were opening quarries. Right outside of Wynona there is a limestone pillar. It is about thirty or forty feet tall. We really liked the town of Wynona. Sleeping out there in that snow and cold weather didn't work so good. It wasn't so long by the middle of November that on the bulletin board, we would train with Sheraton, Arkansas. This was company 783, that I joined there, the name of the company was the same as the name of the governor of Minnesota. But I wasn't there long enough to learn the name.

So we got on the train. It was a special. They never stopped for anything. There were no stops unless we were picking up a change of crew. We ended up in Sheraton, Arkansas. They we were with woolen underwear, woolen pants, woolen shirts, and overcoats and man it was hotter than a fritter down there, and we were worse than that with the wool on. We finally got out of the wool and they issued from WWI clothing. It was jeans, shirts, underwear, shoes and socks. It was really comfortable then. It was still Company 783 in the state of Arkansas.

It was still all Iowa boys in an Iowa company. We were forestry company 4. We were in one of the largest pine belts in the United States. I've seen pine trees that were so big they couldn't harvest them. They'd go up ninety feet before you would get to the first branch. You couldn't even reach around them. I never seen something like that before. Just a country kid. I hadn't been away from home before.

DNR: What kind of pines were they?
Alfred: Long Pines. So we went to work then in the timber. Our job was to control forest fires. There wasn't any roads through that timber down there. So we had to cut down pine trees and pull stumps and build roads, and along the side of the roads there was telephone poles. So we put in telephone poles and telephone lines. That was the main job we had to do down there.

From my part, before we left Minnesota, they told Jack Arnett you're not going to Arkansas. They sent him to another Iowa company. The black man was nothing in Arkansas. We set up the barracks. Which were plain board. There was no insulation. They held 38 men to the barracks. A man came over from the State Department, and said he needed three men to mend a fence. I happened to be in the latrine.
So, I went up to the headquarters. There stood this big old blacksmith. His name was Enders. He was from the state of Texas. He had been an oilfield blacksmith. Lieutenant Walkner was at the desk. He said, 'Is this the man?' He said, "That's him." Then he walked off. So, I thought he must not liked me on that fence work. During that fence job, I had two city guys with me. They had given each of us a hammer and a pocketful of staples. We had three different sides of the fence around there to tighten up and drive staples through. We got about two-thirds away around there, and we came upon some shaded trees and these two guys said, 'We're through working for awhile. We're just gonna sit down and spend some time.' Now I've been taught, that when I was given a job, to stay on the job until its done. I didn't say anything. I just kept tightening the wire. They finally caught up with me.

So, after he had left, the company officer said, 'Would you like to work for the State Department.' I asked him, what would that come at. He said I would be in charge of the saws, axes, shovels and repair them and check them in and out. I said sure, I'll take it. I was inclined to that kind of work anyhow. He said, you'll have to move out of camp. So I got all my stuff and moved.

It was quite a chore. In the beginning it was easy because everything was new. You had to get used to doing what so many shovels went to some place, two-man saws.

DNR: Did you move into the tool shed? What was that called?
Alfred: It was just a blacksmith shop and a tool shed were all one building. So we finally get used to getting a call for a certain thing and it would be gone in short order. So I got used to working there. Then the old blacksmith said, you have to learn to take care of this stuff when it comes back in. He says, the saws have to be filed and they have to be set. He said the axes have to be ground, and if the handles are cracked, then new handles have to be put in.

Well the handles was no chore, but the saw filing was something new to me. So he got out the equipment and we filed by hand. We had a hand set and a tooth leveler. He showed me how it worked on a two-man saw. You would place a saw in the vice. You would go over it with a leveler. You would knock out the teeth, that knocked out the chipper teeth. I learned how to do it. They could lay out pretty good ribbons with the saws that I turned out. But I had close to thirty to forty two-man saws that had to be taken care of. There was twice as many single bit axes. In Arkansas we didn't have any double bit axes. They didn't like them down there because, they were afraid the boys would get with hit it when they were bringing up the upper blade. So, I learned about those things.

After two weeks, until they called me over to the officers' quarters, and he said, 'You've earned your two stripes. You're a junior leader. You're now entitled to $11 a month." So I had my two stripes. So I worked at the job a little longer. It was just two, three or four weeks and they called me back in and said, 'You earned the rest of them. Now you will be drawing $20 a month. Now we'll be using you for a lot of different things.' That made me a leader then. 'If you get caught up in your shop, we need somebody on the fire line to handle a bunch of men, you're gonna have to be ready.' I was a jack-of-all-trades.

I led, I don't know how many fire crews out. And fires weren't bad most of the time. But the needles and leaves would be two to three inches thick. There would be a lot of resin on those needles. They would get on fire, and if the wind was blowing, it would be hard to control. All we had were round edged shovels and a fire rake. Which was a piece of iron with four morris sections riveted to it. It was used to chop brush and rake pine needles. We also had fire hooks. That had an axe handle. It was a curved piece of iron, sharpened on the inside. It was used to cut small trees and brush that you couldn't handle with the shovels and the fire rakes. That was the equipment we used to fight forest fires.

We had a couple of real bad fires. Some of them got to the top. All we could try to do was slow it down in front. We loved it down there in the timber. In the middle of October, we got word we were going back to Iowa. Iowa was recalling all of its men in other states back to Iowa. So, here we had to load up again. We got on a train. We ended up at Lyon, Iowa. Still, Company 783, an Iowa company. So I was in three states with the same company.

When we got Lyon, the town wasn't too happy with us. They didn't want a batch of hoodlums in their town. Well out north of town, they built some of the barracks and we had to finish it up. Halloween was coming. The CO said, 'We're having bed check at 9:00 p.m. Everybody better be in bed or they'll be in bad trouble.' So we knew what he meant. At 9:00 o'clock, I was in charge of barracks #3 at that time. At 9:00 o'clock, the barrack's leader, had to open the door and escort him through the barracks and close the doors when he left. Bed check was done two or three times in the night.

The next day here comes the Mayor and a few of the townspeople. Their mayor said, 'They broke a big window in one of the stores downtown. They soaped the tracks so the train couldn't get up the hill.' Lieutenant Wapner said, 'Well, I'm afraid, your badly mistaken. I knew what your boys were gonna do, and I had bed checks done every three hours last night. I never had a man missing. You just go

back to downtown and arrest your own boys.' After that, we didn't have any problems at Lyon. The town, really benefited from the 3C camp. We spent quite a bit dollars in town.

DNR: You were the first camp at Lyon?
Alfred: We built most of that camp ourselves. They had started it. All three camps I was in were new. We finished the one in Arkansas. We had to build the mess hall. We ate using army mess kits. We had two 55 gallon drums sitting on rocks with water and a small fire underneath to wash the kits. The first drum you would wash the mess kit, and the second drum was the rinse for the mess kit. You had nothing to dry it on. Once a week you would go to the sand pit and scour your kit and utensils. We had that for two months in Arkansas, before we got plates and could eat in the mess hall.

At Lyon, we had a different type of business. We were in farming and quarry territory. We opened up new quarries in Decatur, Ramona, Davis City, and later on those quarries were taken over by the sergeant's company. We altogether had different types of equipment compared to Arkansas. Here we had shovels, picks, Maddox, and a few double bit axes, a few saws. My job was to make sure the shovels were fixed if cracked, then I would braise them. If the Maddox got dull, then it was my job to get the fords going and sharpen them. It had a real heavy handle.

DNR: What is a Maddox?
Alfred: A tool with a heavy handle, with a blade on one side and a pick on the other side. This pick and blade would get dull. We ground them sometime. I had a lot of work to do. It was a wonderful experience. I've always said, I could never figure how much it would cost to create friends and other experiences. I only saw one fist fight and they were two big city boys who had a grudge against each. They jumped over the fence and went into the timber and fought. The winner came out. The other boy just disappeared into the timber. We never saw him again.

In the three years and three months I was there it was the only fight. You could lay anything on your bunk and it would still be there when you got back. You learned about cleanliness. So some of the boys didn't know about cleanliness. We took showers every night. If you didn't take a shower every night, then it wouldn't be long before the leader of the barracks would tell him to take a bath. If he refused to take the bath then you would go to the company commander. Then the company commander would give permission to give him a 'G.I.' That's not to good to get a G.I. Because we take you down to the latrine, bathhouse, strip you down and turn the water on cold, get in there right with him, and with a bar of lye soap and a brush and you give him a cleaning. When he gets out, that's usually the only one he ever has.

It was a learning experience. Even when I got out, I stayed in the blacksmith business until I got hurt and quit.

DNR: The stoves in Arkansas were heated with what material?
Alfred: They were cone stoves. Just a sheet of metal, shaped like a cove, thirty inches high that sat on six inches of sand. It was in a sandbox. In Arkansas we

burned pine knots. We used the limb joints from fallen trees, because that's where the resin congregates. That was almost pure resin.

Some of the boys one night wanted to see who hot they could get the stove. Well they did. They loaded it up with pine knots. And it got red hot. It pretty soon, it began to sink through the floor and was catching the floor on fire. That was the last time it happened when the CO found out.

DNR: You said something about the food and how everyone was able to gain weight in the camp?

Alfred: You would swear, that some of the food we ate in camp was good food, and cooked in large pots for 280 men besides the officers in the camp. We worked a lot and it was hard to gain weight because we worked so hard.

DNR: What about the chewing tobacco story?

Alfred: This was on fire watch one night. We didn't have our steel tower erected yet in the state of Arkansas. We'd have to climb a pine tree to take a look or a water tower. They sent me out on this fire. They had sent me out towards Pine Bluffs. About half way between Sheraton and Pine Bluffs. We came to a place in the middle of this timber. There was a wooden water tower with a wooden ladder. I climbed that ladder, every time I looked down the driver looked the size of a matchbook.

I got back down and two black men who were elderly were waiting for me. One asked me I could have a chew of tobacco. I gave him the rest of my plug. He said, he hadn't had a chew of tobacco in years because he hadn't been to town in years. He said, 'I'm pretty old, I don't go anymore. I was a drummer boy in the Civil War. Now you know how old I am.' That was in 1934. I can still see him chewing that tobacco. He really enjoyed it. It was really interesting on the different types of people you could meet there.

Our head forester was named V.L. Massey. He lived close to Arkadelphia. On Labor Day, I don't know why he took a liking to us three guys, anyhow, he went to the CO without asking us, if he could take three boys with him on leave to his home for the long weekend. The CO gave him permission to do it. We were really on top then. We put on our best bib and tucker. And he took us through Hot Springs. That's when they were working the Negro real bad. They were hosing the whole city. The city just shone. We ran out to his place, quite a distance from Hot Springs, and his daughter went to a teacher's college near Arkadelphia. And she had brought home two girlfriends home with her. So he introduced us guys all the way around. He said enjoy the weekend. I have this pond filled with trout. So if you would like to fish let me know. So, I said I would like to fish pretty soon. Before you fish, come and let me know. He went to the little house by the pond, and he brought up a pail full of trout food and threw it in the water, and the water boiled with the number of trout that were in there. You couldn't catch a trout after that to save your cotton pick'in neck. He knew you couldn't. And we never caught any trout. We had a wonderful weekend.

One of the modern woodsman took me home one weekend to gig frogs. We gigged frogs that were eighteen inches long. And what they would do, he went out and shot two squirrels before supper time and cleaned them. He brought them into

his wife. She cleaned them and put them in two cast iron skillets. That's all they had back then was the cast iron skillet. She had probably an inch to an inch and a half of lard in them. They were boiling hot and fried them until they were crisp. They would take these legs and cut the hind legs right next to the body, and peel them and they were the size of chicken legs. She would drop them in the hot grease and they would kick and sputter for a little while and you never ate anything so delicious in your entire life out there in that timber and those great big frogs.

But, when you gigged one, you had a ten foot pole, with a gig at the end of it. When you gigged him, you couldn't raise the pole, because the frog was too big. You would go out at night with the flashlight to the lily pads. You would throw the flashlight beam across and then you would see those two big eyes. You would swing your gig around, and jab your gig and then you would bring your frog in. I had a lot of interesting experiences.

DNR: Did you mention something about a country/western singer?
Alfred: Yes I had a friend, who was a real nice lady. Her name was Aljalee Akovic. Her father was an engineer on the railroad. She just lived with her father. Her girlfriend happened to be the girlfriend of the truck master of my buddy who stayed with me in the shop there. Just the two of us stayed in the shop with our bunks. This girlfriend brought her with her one night when she found out I was the buddy of her boyfriend. She sang over the radio, and there was only one radio station in Little Rock at that time. She sang country/western. I figure she is one of the first country/western singers to sing over the radio. This was 1934.

She wanted me to leave camp when her father was moved to Cincinnati or Cleveland. I can't remember. She wanted me to go along. I told her no, because my mother and the kids needed the money. We wrote back and forth and after a while I gave up on her. Her picture is in the trunk. The top of the locker. My brother's picture, Ed, and my sister, Viola's picture is in the locker. My younger brother is on the tilling machine. His name is Elmer. He ran all sorts of equipment. He died of cancer when he was about 40 years old.

DNR: What kind of patches did you have?
Alfred: We had different patches. We could get forestry patches when we were in Arkansas.

DNR: Here are your soap dishes?
Alfred: In the very beginning, we got silver and gold dishes. They issued you a toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving blades, and a Gillette shaver. Soap was issued. It was bath soap. We had to use it for everything.

DNR: Inside your trunk here you have a shoeshine kit?
Alfred: Well in the beginning you shined your shoes with wax. And then that was when we first in. When we got a colored shoe, then we used shoe polish. On the work shoes, we used the same wax that was used on the bunk and floor. Everybody in your barracks cleaned the floor with heavy bristle brushes and then dried. We used the paste wax with the brushes. They taught you how to be clean.

DNR: Here you have a match case for the USS Arizona. Where did you come across that?
Alfred: That was probably from later on after I got out of camp. My wife's cousin's husband was a survivor of the Pearl Harbor attack. He lives in Greenfield, Iowa.

DNR: There is also some olive drab material?
Alfred: That's from the WWI pants that were issued to you. When they were kept up they look nice.

DNR: You said something about the lettering on the trunk. How did you get the lettering done on the trunk?
Alfred: Well there was a young fella in camp, who knew how to letter. It cost me $1 to do it on the lid with my Mother's address. He used red paint and gold dust. It was real nice. We didn't have lockers at first, just barrack bags. We didn't have lockers in Arkansas. The government shipped them out to the camps. We paid around $3 to $3.50.

DNR: You have sunglasses in here.
Alfred: I didn't wear them. I should of because I'm blind now.

DNR: You talked about the camp in Lyon. Your brother was in Ladora.
Alfred: As you can see how the beds were kept in the barracks. Blanket had to be so tight. If you didn't have the blanket tight enough for a dime to bounce, then he tore apart that whole bed and threw it all over the barracks. Then it was up to you to put that bed back together and did it so the dime would bounce.

DNR: You had double bunk beds in one picture?
Alfred: Bunks were single. Double bunk might be in the cook shack. They doubled those guys up and they kept them away from the other guys.

DNR: You have the large photo of the guys in Arkansas?
Alfred: That was in Sheraton, Arkansas. That was right after Christmas. That was taken right at the main gate to the camp. I always liked that picture. It was a government picture. The man went from camp to camp taking pictures. He would only take one picture.

DNR: They used tar paper on the roof?
Alfred: That's the way they did it in Arkansas.

DNR: How did you wash your pants?
Alfred: You went down to the latrine. Or down to the wash bathhouse and wash them. Or you could hire someone outside of camp to wash them. That's how we did our dress clothes. We didn't have a scrub board.

DNR: You got a box full of letters?

Alfred: Mostly letters from my mother. They were 3 cent stamps. I had 27 addresses for my camp and other locations I had to write too.

DNR: You have a democratic song book?
Alfred: I don't recall.

DNR: How did you get your work assignments?
Alfred: My work came in automatically to fix axes or shovels. I had men under me. We didn't have any bosses over us.

DNR: Before you were a tool master did you go out in the trucks?
Alfred: Only to fight fires as a leader. You were subject to call. You took whatever was given to you. I like it that way.

DNR: What kind of equipment did you use?
Alfred: We had files and different grades, saucettes which set the teeth, a device that levels the teeth. It was automatically issued to the shops. You had hammers, drill bits, no electricity. We had to turn the drills by hand and the fords by hand. Even the little grinder we had to turn the grinder by hand to sharpen the axes.

DNR: Do you remember the names of any workers?
Alfred: Just Jake and Lee.

DNR: Do you have any contact today with CCCers?
Alfred: The guy that was in charge of the trucks. He went to Chicago and took electrical class and he went to the Pullman Train Company and he was their main electrical engineer. Another friend went to Chicago to build a tunnel and be sandhogs. But they were losing a lot of people. He got a job dehydrating the equipment in the factory.

DNR: Did the city kids and the country kids get along?
Alfred: They got along. The city kids would go AWOL more than the country kids.

DNR: Were there any minority groups in the camp?
Alfred: I saw some of the Negroes treated terribly. They hauled them around in trucks to work the farms. Whole families working the cotton fields. They had signs telling them to be out of town before sundown.

DNR: Was Jack treated okay?
Alfred: He was a talented musician. Officers paid him to perform.

DNR: Did you have any special skills you learned in camp?
Alfred: No not really. There was a lot of different things I did learn. I learned to get along with my fellow man. In my three years and three months I was in, I saw little trouble in the camp. These were bad at that time. Things were tough.

DNR: What do you think benefited you most from the camp?
Alfred: Well, I had my own shop when I left the camp. I had my own shop for 15 years until I got hurt. Then I had a country store.

DNR: Was there anyone getting injured at work?
Alfred: Charlie Booton got injured. Six or seven guys were carrying this telephone pole, at one end was a fella by the name of Moose Stanley. He could get stubborn every once in a while. When it came time to drop the telephone pole, why the young fella in charge, was supposed to tell him when he is supposed to drop it. Moose dropped his pole early and Charlie got his hand smashed. They doctored him up and he stayed in camp. We had a doctor. Our main CO, Lt. Wiley, and Lt. Walker, and the camp doctor, same rank, I went to Des Moines because I had athlete's foot up to my ankles.

DNR: Were there any diseases in the camp?
Alfred: No. But I think they experimented on us. They would give us shots without telling us what they were. Sometimes the shots hurt so much we couldn't get our shirts back on.

DNR: Were there any insects or rodents in the camp?
Alfred: In Arkansas, one time it happened, someone came in with bedbugs. So they brought in a barrel of diesel fuel. We had to roll up our cots and dip them into the diesel fuel. We stripped them first. That was the only thing that happened. There was no lice.

DNR: Did you ever work in the community?
Alfred: No.

DNR: Did you have any contact with the community?
Alfred: Yes. You were allowed to have girlfriends in town. You'd go to a pie social or box supper social.

DNR: Did you have any contact with females while in the camp?
Alfred: Yes a Bohemian. Her name was Aljalee Octavic. She was a nice young looking woman. She had a nice personality and she had transportation. Her girlfriend was the girlfriend of the truck master. We passed the time away.

DNR: Did you have dances in town?
Alfred: I didn't go to dances. We were 20 miles from Little Rock. We were 10 miles from Sheraton. And I think I went to Sheraton once. I went to Little Rock only when the CO would drive us and tell us to stay out of the red light district. He showed us where it was. But some guys still went down there.

DNR: Were venereal diseases present?
Alfred: I don't know if a man was caught with any.

DNR: Did you have problems with men in the community dating their women?
Alfred: You had to play it by ear.

DNR: How do you thing the community felt about the CCC camp?
Alfred: We pulled in there in the last week of October. The CO was smart enough to have bed check on Halloween every hour until sunrise. Some of the guys in Leon tried to get us in trouble. The train had to come up a hill to get to our camp. The kids in town soaped the rails.

DNR: What was your most memorable experience in the C's?
Alfred: Seeing the territory and meeting and working and playing with the fellas.

DNR: Do you remember any odd experiences in camp?
Alfred: We had four inches of rain in one hour in the Des Moines paper.

DNR: What do you think was your biggest accomplishment?
Alfred: Learning how to get along with my fellow man. If you could do that, then you have accomplished quite a bit.

DNR: Do you think your life was affected by the C's?
Alfred: Yes. I think it got better. I learned how to take orders. I learned how to give orders.

DNR: What did you do after you left the C's?
Alfred: I went to Hebron in January '37. I reopened a blacksmith shop. Two men loaned me $50 at 6% interest to buy tools with and to live on. And it was quite a long time before I had the money to pay them back. Things were tough. Then after about 3 years I had gotten married and built a new shop, and things got better until I got hurt. Then we got the store and we stayed in the store 16 years.

DNR: You mentioned you got hurt in the blacksmith shop, how?
Alfred: I tried to lift to much weight and I ruptured myself. I traveled on the road for a while as a salesman. Then I went into the store.

DNR: Any stories or pranks?
Alfred: We would police the grounds and persimmons are a fruit which grew in the camp. The coveralls never fit. They were either too small or too big. We would pick up persimmons. Or they would tease this person who stuttered.

DNR: You weren't in the war?
Alfred: No. I was in the blacksmith shop and my age. I am 89 years old. Also in the trunk you will find the Leon Gazettes. They were printed for the camp. Today we still receive it today. It was just camp news and the different guys. I kept those two. I'm mentioned in one of them. That is why I kept one of them. There is also a menu for the Thanksgiving Dinner. I have the roster of the complete camp, including the

officers, cooks, leaders, and sub leaders of 1936. The wishbone is still in there. It is whole and I didn't break it. I didn't make a wish with that one.

I had a real good friend, who was one of the cooks, and this is something unusual. We were down in Leon. One day he called me over to the mess hall. He said, 'I want to show you something.' He had just opened a case of 30 dozen eggs, and the top of that case was a candling slip. This was 1936. This case of eggs had been candled in Greenfield, Iowa, at a Produce Company by a Mr. Patterson in 1932. When you broke those eggs, they were so thin. They came out of a town I left from. The scarf was a gift from my mother. We had one guy who was a photographer and he took a lot of pictures. He developed my own pictures at a nickel a piece. I had two boys from my hometown helping me in the workshop. One kid's name was Jake Waring and the other was Lee Carter. We were always trying to think of something to do. The photographer wanted us to come up with something to take a good picture. So we got out the chains and we got an axe and made it look like we were going to cut his head off.

One day, the cook hollered at me. I went over, he said, 'The government sent out this meat and we don't have refrigeration.' It smelled so bad that the cook had to turn his head to put the meat in the pot. We ate it. It didn't kill us. But we couldn't eat all the meat for that months. But the government had a lot to do. There were over 2000 camps.

GNR: Tell me the story again the night you came back from work and the kitchen had run out of food.

Alfred: We came in one night with two loads of men. We had been working in the quarry. They had pulled me out of the shop. It was the graveyard shift. We had come in at midnight. We went to the latrines and washed up and went to the mess hall. The cook said to me all that he had was some watery soup and some crackers. Our food shipment never came in. I told him that was not enough. He agreed.

So I went to the CO's barracks and beat on his door and woke him up. He told me to go back and wait. He got his driver up. They went downtown and woke up a storeowner and he bought ground beef and crackers. The cook cooked us supper. We got done at about 2:00 a.m. with eating our supper. He was honest. He was a good ole boy. He said, 'I never had the least idea that they were out of food. At least if I knew it never would of happened.' We ate chili that night.

DNR: This is the first time I ever heard of the graveyard shift. Is this something that was common?

Alfred: Oh yeah. We worked a lot of three shifts in 24 hours. You worked an eight hour shift. Then you would come in and the next shift would take the trucks and head out. The three shifts were at Lyon. The first shift worked 8 hours. They brought your meal in the field. We did this for quite a while. The reason for doing it, was because there was not enough equipment around to send everyone out at once.

DNR: Did you do this at Arkansas as well?

Alfred: No.

DNR: How were black people treated in Arkansas?
Alfred: Yes. That was back in the day when the black man didn't amount to anything according to the white man. Of course we were down in cotton territory. They would load these Negroes up in trucks in the town of Little Rock. They would pick them back in an open truck, and cram it with men and women. They would bring them to the fields after sundown. They would work their heads off, chopping weeds and cotton. Before sunset, they would take them back to town. Because there were signs posted that stated, 'Nigger, don't let the sun set on you in such and such county.' They treated them rough, because the old blacksmith I worked for, shot a Negro on his front porch. Supposedly he wasn't doing something he was hired to do. He was in court just three minutes and released. That's what they though of the Negro. I've seen whole families with cotton sacks picking cotton all day long. I saw a lot of things. We tried to get the 3C's started again. But we couldn't. Reagan didn't want to have anything to do with it, because it was a democratic project. We still could use the 3C's today, the parks are going to pot. We had better parks after we finished the CCC's.

DNR: What year did you get out of the C's?
Albert: I went in October 8, 1933 and I left on December 31, '36. Three years and three months. 3C's were just three months old when I joined. I am 91 and a half years old now.

DNR: What time of the month did you get paid?
Albert: The last day of the month.

DNR: How much?
Albert: The regular enlistees got $5 and the rest went home which is $25. Then a corporal got $11 and $25 went home. The leader or three striper got $20 and the rest went home.

DNR: What did you do with your money?
Alfred: I sent some money home and sometimes spent money going to a basket supper. I didn't squander the money. We weren't used to money so we took care of it pretty well.

DNR: Was there a place on base where you could spend your money?
Alfred: Commissary. Most guys would go to the commissary. I smoked. But I rolled my own cigarettes. I could buy a full carton of golden grain, which was 20 nickel bags for a dollar. That would last me a month. The rolling papers were a nickel. They also sold toiletries there. We had a barber in camp. It was fifteen cents for a haircut.

DNR: What were your days off?
Alfred: Because I was leader, I could be called at any time. Actually, you worked five days. On Saturdays, we scrubbed and waxed the barracks. We had an inspector who came and checked the beds, floor and feel above the white windows for dust

with their white gloves. We took showers everyday. If someone didn't do it than it was up to the leader of the barracks to warn him. Now, I had one fella, who absolutely refused to bathe. His name was Major. He wouldn't do it. So we stripped him down. Took him down to the bath. Got the scrub brush and soap and scrubbed him until he was good and red. Then we turned him loose. We had to do that three times until he would start taking a bath by himself. He wasn't the only one. It happened in other camps as well.

DNR: How was the Sabbath observed at camp?
Alfred: The minister would come in on Sunday. You had the choice to go into town for church. Vince Besty used to tease me about sleeping in on Sunday. He's a deputy sheriff in Red Wing, Minnesota. I stopped to see him. He was the sheriff.

DNR: What were the sports activities?
Alfred: We had a baseball team. We played civilian teams. We also had horseshoe courts. Just things like that. Some football.

DNR: Basketball or Volleyball?
Alfred: We had ping-pong and pool tables. We had a recreation barracks. We had four pool tables and one ping-pong table. In another part of the barracks we had woodworking in the rec barracks.

DNR: How were personal conflicts handled?
Alfred: If it were a bad one it would be between two guys. We had a lot of guys who were discontented. They would go AWOL. They risk losing their civilian rights. You could lose your right to vote.

DNR: If there was a disagreement did they box?
Alfred: We had those. But it never got that bad.

DNR: How would discipline a rule breaker?
Alfred: You would appear in front of the commanding officer.

DNR: Was KP punishment?
Alfred: Yes and policing the camp for cigarette butts.

DNR: What were the trade and educational opportunities?\
Alfred: I already graduated from the 12th grade. I don't remember what classes I took. I don't remember the names of the teachers. I don't remember. We had 5 civilians that taught. They were LEM's. I learned a lot from my jobs. Our company, in each location was different. In Minnesota we worked rock quarries. In Arkansas, we fought fires, we built telephone lines, we set up steel water barrels. We had to climb trees to locate smoke for fires. I headed a lot of fire patrols. I had 42 cross set saws to keep sharp. I had 50 axes to care of. I had 100 sand shovels to keep in shape. We had four fire hoses. We had picks to maintain. I learned the blacksmith trade there.

DNR: Where were the classes held?
Alfred: The classes were held in the recreation building.

DNR: What benefit did you get from the classes?
Alfred: I learned a lot of things. You learned to get along with people. That was the main thing. We got along real well.

DNR: What projects were your camps involved?
Alfred: At Wynona. We were in the quarry business. In Arkansas we were in the timber. The number one job was fire patrol. We fought forest fires 24 hours a day. It didn't make a difference. When we got a fire call in, you would wake up your fire crew and go. We had a telephone crew. They built poles and laid the wires. We cut through the timbers and built roads. At that time you raised your hogs in the forest. They lived off the land.

DNR: What did you do at Lyon?
Alfred: At Lyon we went to take care of drainage ditches, fencing, opening quarries.

DNR: What were some of your duties?
Alfred: Well, in the quarries at Lyon in Davis City, I ran a hammer, jackhammer on the ledge and on the boulders if they were too big for the crusher. Sometimes I had a crew to supervise. In Arkansas, I was a tool master and in Lyon. As a leader you were on duty all the time. If the CO called you to do something, you did it right now. I had the barracks to take care of. It was a good life.

DNR: You learned how to jackhammer and blacksmith work. What other skills?
Alfred: None.

DNR: Who were your leaders?
Alfred: You earned your spot. I fell into my leadership spot.

DNR: Did you get along with the boys?
Alfred: Yes.

DNR:

END OF TRANSCRIPTION – SAM J. HAIM - SCRIBE